

Joy

Habakkuk 3.16-19; Philippians 4.4-13

There is a great deal of difference between joy and happiness. Happiness depends upon happenings. It comes from the word “hap” which means “luck, happenstance”; you’re just lucky, fortunate, and happy. Happiness is external; joy is internal. Happiness is based on circumstances and when they change you’re not happy anymore; joy is based on Christ. Happiness is based on chance; joy is based on your choice. “Joy is more than being happy. It is the understanding that God is in control in all circumstances, and is with his people always.”

The book of Habakkuk gives one of the finest examples of joy in the midst of brokenness. At the time of its writing, the people of Israel had persisted in telling God no even though for hundreds of years he had been asking them to obey. Now God was using two giant world powers to discipline his people. The great nation of Assyria had already lopped off the northern half of the nation in 722 B.C., and God was bringing the greater nation of Babylon down to finish the job by destroying the southern half. In 605 B.C. Babylonia had just destroyed the Egyptian armies that had marched north of Israel to try to stop the southward advance of the Babylonians. Although the exact setting of Habakkuk's ministry is uncertain, he probably ministered in the times of kings Josiah, Jehoahaz, and Jehoiakim (640-597 B.C.).

The book of Habakkuk provided comfort and hope during one of the darkest periods of Israel's history, a time during which she suffered the deserved punishment for her sins.

QUESTION-AND-ANSWER STYLE

The book of Habakkuk was written in the form of a question and answer session between Habakkuk and God. The questions of Habakkuk were similar to those asked by most honest seekers of God who see evil that has gone unpunished. These questions reveal to the reader much of the book's content and the direction of its application. The book begins like a lament psalm: “How long?” “I cry out,” “Why?” (1.2-3). Then Habakkuk asked another set of questions concerning God's silence in the face of evil (1.13-14). Although God would eventually judge evil, the answer to the questions of “How long?” and “Does he care?” was given in 2.4. The righteous were called to wait and be faithful, even when some questions could not be answered immediately.

BIBLE-WIDE CONCEPTS

See, he is puffed up;
his desires are not upright -
but **the righteous will live by his faith.** Habakkuk 2.4; Romans 1.17; Galatians 3.11; Hebrews 10.38

Habakkuk 3.16-19 is paraphrased by Paul in Philippians 4.4-13. It speaks volumes to us regarding joy with resolution in the midst of the realities of life.

¹⁶ I heard and my heart pounded,
my lips quivered at the sound;
decay crept into my bones,
and my legs trembled.
Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity
to come on the nation invading us.

¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,

¹⁸ yet **I will rejoice in the LORD,**
I will be joyful in God my Savior.

¹⁹ **The Sovereign LORD is my strength;**
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights.

⁴ **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!** ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ **I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but **rejoice** that your names are written in heaven. Luke 10.20

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹² Restore to me the **joy** of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Psalm 51.10, 12; 32.1-5